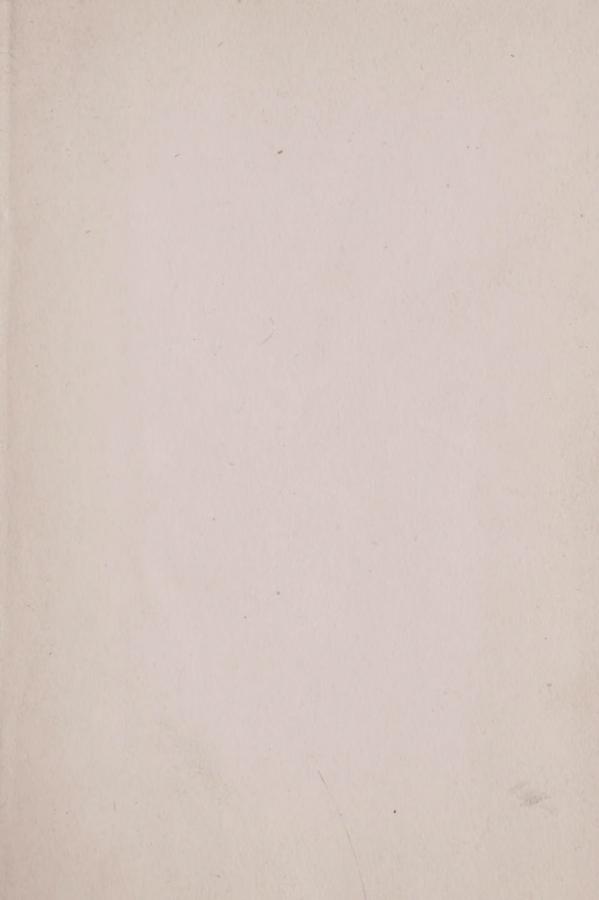


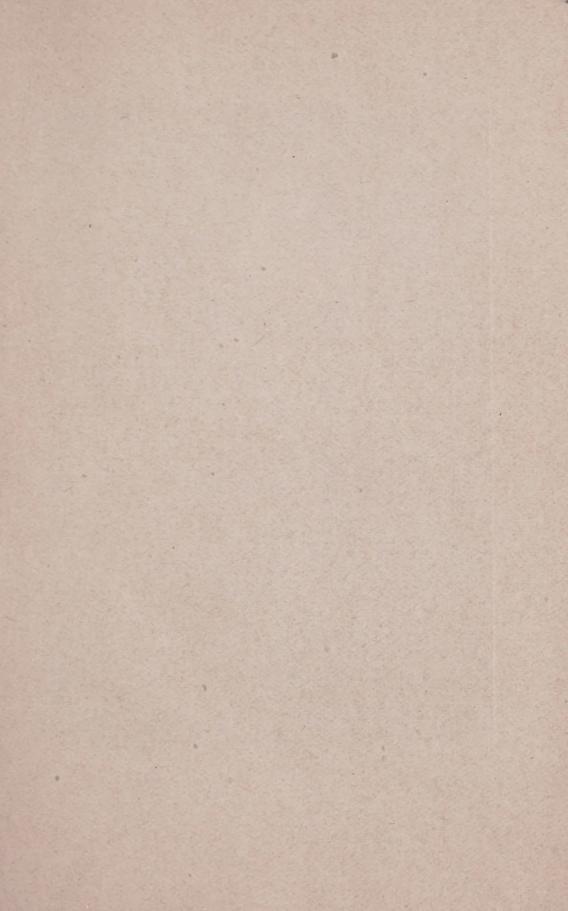


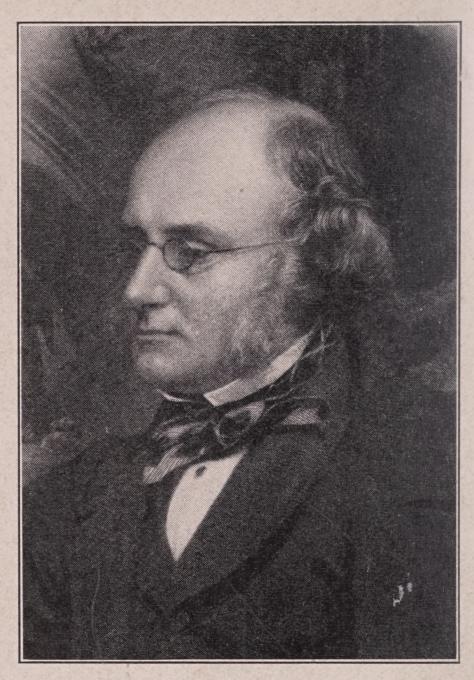
Class PZ 3
Book B 8 / 68 P
Copyright No. 20

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.









DR. JOHN BROWN.

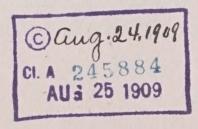
Rab and His Friends

By Dr. John Brown

Philadelphia Henry Altemus Company +Z3 B8168R

Copyright 1909 by Howard E. Altemus





RAB AND HIS FRIENDS.

Rab and his Friends.

Four-AND-THIRTY years ago, Bob Ainslie and I were coming up Infirmary Street from the Edinburgh High School our heads together, and our arms intertwisted, as only lovers and boys know how, or why.

When we got to the top of the street, and turned north, we espied a crowd at the Tron Church. "A dog-fight!" shouted Bob, and was off; and so was I, both of us all but praying that it might not be over before we got up! And is not this boy-nature? and human nature too? and don't we all wish a house on fire not to be out before we see it? Dogs like fighting; old Isaac

says they "delight" in it, and for the best of all reasons; and boys are not cruel because they like to see the fight. They see three of the great cardinal virtues of dog or man-courage, endurance, and skill-in intense action. This is very different from a love of making dogs fight, and enjoying, and aggravating, and making gain by their pluck. Aboy, be he ever so fond himself of fighting, if he be a good boy, hates and despises all this, but he would have run off with Bob and me fast enough: it is a natural, and a not wicked interest, that all boys and men have in witnessing intense energy in action.

Does any curious and finely ignorant woman wish to know how Bob's eye at a glance announced a dog-fight to his brain? He did not, he could not see the dogs fighting; it was a flash of an inference, a rapid induction. The crowd round a couple of dogs fighting is a crowd masculine mainly, with an occasional active, compassionate woman, fluttering wildly round the outside, and using her tongue and her hands freely upon the men, as so many "brutes"; it is a crowd annular, compact, and mobile; a crowd centripetal, having its eyes and its heads all bent downwards and inwards, to one common focus.

Well, Bob and I are up, and find it is not over: a small, thoroughbred, white bull-terrier is busy throttling a large shepherd's dog, unaccustomed to war, but not to be trifled with. They are hard at it; the scientific little fellow doing his work in great style, his pastoral enemy fighting wildly, but with the sharpest of teeth and a great courage. Science and breeding, however, soon had their own; the Game Chicken, as the premature Bob called

him, working his way up, took his final grip of poor Yarrow's throat, -and he lay gasping and done for. His master, a brown, handsome, big young shepherd from Tweedsmuir, would have liked to have knocked down any man, would "drink up Esil, or eat a crocodile," for that part, if he had a chance: it was no use kicking the little dog; that would only make him hold the closer. Many were the means shouted out in mouthfuls, of the best possible ways of ending it. "Water!" but there was none near, and many cried for it who might have got it from the well at Blackfriars Wynd. "Bite the tail!" and a large, vague, benevolent middle-aged man, more desirous than wise, with some struggle got the bushy end of Yarrow's tail into his ample mouth, and bit it with all his might. This was more than enough for the much-enduring, much-perspiring

shepherd, who, with a gleam of joy over his broad visage, delivered a terrific facer upon our large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged friend,—who went down like a shot.

Still the Chicken holds; death not far off. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" observed a calm, highly-dressed young buck, with an eye-glass in his eye. "Snuff, indeed!" growled the angry crowd, affronted and glaring. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" again observes the buck, but with more urgency; whereon were produced several open boxes, and from a mull which may have been at Culloden, he took a pinch, knelt down, and presented it to the nose of the Chicken. The laws of physiology and of snuff take their course; the Chicken sneezes, and Yarrow is free!

The young pastoral giant stalks off with Yarrow in his arms,—comforting him.

But the Bull Terrier's blood is up, and his soul unsatisfied; he grips the first dog he meets, and discovering she is not a dog, in Homeric phrase, he makes a brief sort of amende, and is off. The boys, with Bob and me at their head, are after him: down Niddry Street he goes, bent on mischief; up the Cowgate like an arrow,—Bob and I, and our small men, panting behind.

There under the single arch of the South Bridge, is a huge mastiff, sauntering down the middle of the causeway, as if with his hands in his pockets: he is old, gray, brindled, as big as a little Highland bull, and has the Shakespearian dewlaps shaking as he goes.

The Chicken makes straight at him, and fastens on his throat. To our astonishment, the great creature does nothing but stand still, hold himself up, and roar,—yes, roar; a long, seri-

ous, remonstrative roar. How is this? Bob and I are up to them. He is muzzled! The bailies had proclaimed a general muzzling, and his master studying strength and economy mainly, had encompassed his huge jaws in a home-made apparatus, constructed out of the leather of some ancient breechin. His mouth was open as far it could: his lips curled up in rage, -a sort of terrible grin; his teeth gleaming, ready, from out the darkness; the strap across his mouth tense as a bowstring; his whole frame stiff with indignation and surprise; his roar asking us all round, "Did you ever see the like of this?" He looked a statue of anger and astonishment, done in Aberdeen granite.

We soon had a crowd: the Chicken held on. "A knife!" cried Bob; and a cobbler gave him his knife: you know the kind of knife, worn away obliquely to a point and always keen. I put its edge to the tense leather; it ran before it; and then!—one sudden jerk of that enormous head a sort of dirty mist about his mouth, no noise,—and the bright and fierce little fellow is dropped, limp and dead. A solemn pause: this was more than any of us had bargained for. I turned the little fellow over, and saw he was quite dead; the mastiff had taken him by the small of the back like a rat, and broken it.

He looked down at his victim appeased, ashamed, and amazed; snuffed him all over, stared at him, and taking a sudden thought, turned round and trotted off. Bob took the dead dog up, and said, "John, we'll bury him after tea." "Yes," said I, and was off after the mastiff. He made up the Cowgate at a rapid swing; he had forgotten some engage-

ment. He turned up the Candlemaker Row, and stopped at the Harrow Inn.

There was a carrier's cart ready to start, and a keen, thin, impatient, black-a-vised little man, his hand at his gray horse's head, looking about angrily for something.

"Rab, ye thief!" said he, aiming a kick at my great friend, who drew cringing up, and avoiding the heavy shoe with more agility than dignity, and watching his master's eye, slunk dismayed under the cart,—his ears down, and as much as he had of tail down too.

What a man this must be,—thought I,—to whom my tremendous hero turns tail! The carrier saw the muzzle hanging, cut and useless, from his neck, and I eagerly told him the story, which Bob and I always thought, and still think, Homer, or King David, or Sir Walter alone, were worthy to re-

hearse. The severe little man was mitigated, and condescended to say, "Rab, my man, puir Rabbie,"—whereupon the stump of a tail rose up, the ears were cocked, the eyes filled, and were comforted; the two friends were reconciled. "Hupp!" and a stroke of the whip were given to Jess; and off went the three.

Bob and I buried the Game Chicken that night (we had not much of a tea) in the back-green of his house in Melville Street, No. 17, with considerable gravity and silence; and being at the time in the Iliad, and, like all boys, Trojans, we called him Hector, of course.

Six years have passed,—a long time for a boy and a dog; Bob Ainslie is off to the wars; I am a medical Hospital. Rab I saw almost every week, on the Wednesday; and we had much pleasant intimacy. I found the way to his heart by frequent scratching of his huge head, and an occasional bone. When I did not notice him he would plant himself straight before me, and stand wagging that bud of a tail, and looking up, with his head a little to the one side. His master I occasionally saw; he used to call me "Maister John," but was laconic as any Spartan.

One fine October afternoon, I was leaving the hospital, when I saw the large gate open, and in walked Rab, with that great and easy saunter of his. He looked as if taking general possession of the place; like the Duke of Wellington entering a subdued city, satiated with victory and peace. After him came Jess, now white from age,

with her cart; and in it a woman, carefully wrapped up,—the carrier leading the horse anxiously, and looking back. When he saw me, James (for his name was James Noble) made a curt and grotesque "boo," and said, "Maister John, this is the mistress; she's got trouble in her breest,—some kind o' an income we're thinkin'."

By this time I saw the woman's face; she was sitting on a sack filled with straw, her husband's plaid round her, and his big-coat, with its large white metal buttons, over her feet.

I never saw a more unforgetable face, —pale, serious, lonely, * delicate, sweet, without being at all what we call fine. She looked sixty, and had on a mutch, white as snow, with its black ribbon; her silvery, smooth hair setting off her

^{*} It is not easy giving this look by one word; it was expressive of her being so much of her life alone.

dark-gray eyes,—eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it: her eyebrows black and delicate, and her mouth firm, patient, and contented, which few mouths ever are.

As I have said, I never saw a more beautiful countenance, or one more subdued to settled quiet. "Ailie," said James, "this is Maister John, the young doctor; Rab's freend, ye ken. often speak aboot you, doctor." She smiled, and made a movement, but said nothing; and prepared to come down, putting her plaid aside and rising. Had Solomon, in all his glory, been handing down the Queen of Sheba at his palace gate, he could not have done it more daintily, more tenderly, more like a gentleman, than did James the Howgate carrier, when he lifted down Ailie his wife. The contrast of his Rab-2

small, swarthy, weather-beaten, keen, worldly face to hers—pale, subdued, and beautiful—was something wonderful. Rab looked on concerned and puzzled, but ready for anything that might turn up,—were it to strangle the nurse, the porter, or even me. Ailie and he seemed great friends.

"As I was sayin', she's got a kind o' trouble in her breest, doctor; wull ye tak' a look at it?" We walked into the consulting-room, all four; Rab grim and comic, willing to be happy and confidential if cause could be shown, willing also to be the reverse, on the same terms. Ailie sat down, undid her open gown and her lawn handkerchief round her neck, and without a word showed me her right breast. I looked at and examined it carefully, —she and James watching me, and Rab eying all three. What could I say? there it was, that had once been

so soft, so shapely, so white, so gracious and bountiful, so "full of all blessed conditions,"—hard as a stone, a centre of horrid pain, making that pale face, with its gray, lucid, reasonable eyes, and its sweet, resolved mouth, express the full measure of suffering overcome. Why was that gentle, modest, sweet woman, clean and lovable, condemned by God to bear such a burden?

I got her away to bed. "May Rab and me bide?" said James. "You may; and Rab, if he will behave himself." "I'se warrant he's do that, doctor"; and in slank the faithful beast. I wish you could have seen him. There are no such dogs now. He belonged to a lost tribe. As I have said, he was brindled and gray like Rubislaw granite; his hair short, hard, and close, like a little bull,—a sort of com-

pressed Hercules of a dog. He must have been ninety pounds' weight, at the least; he had a large blunt head; his muzzle black as night, his mouth blacker than any night, a tooth or two -being all he had-gleaming out of his jaws of darkness. His head was scarred with the records of old wounds, a sort of series of fields of battle all over it; one eye out, one ear cropped as close as was Archbishop Leighton's father's; the remaining eye had the power of two; and above it, and in constant communication with it, was a tattered rag of an ear, which was forever unfurling itself, like an old flag; and then that bud of a tail, about one inch long, if it could in any sense be said to be long, being as broad as long, -the mobility, the instantaneousness of that bud were very funny and surprising, and its expressive twinklings and winkings, the intercommunications between the eye, the ear, and it, were of the oddest and swiftest.

Rab had the dignity and simplicity of great size; and having fought his way all along the road to absolute supremacy, he was as mighty in his own line as Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Wellington, and had the gravity * of all great fighters.

You must have often observed the likeness of certain men to certain animals, and of certain dogs to men. Now, I never looked at Rab without thinking of the great Baptist preacher, Andrew Fuller.† The same large,

* A Highland game-keeper, when asked why a certain terrier, of singular pluck, was so much more solemn than the other dogs, said, "O, sir, life's full o' sairiousness to him,—he just never can get enuff o' fechtin'."

† Fuller was, in early life, when a farmer lad at Soham, famous as a boxer; not quarrelsome, but not without "the stern delight" a man of strength and courage feels in their exercise. Dr.

heavy, menacing, combative, sombre, honest countenance, the same deep inevitable eye, the same look,—as of thunder asleep, but ready,—neither a dog nor a man to be trifled with.

Next day, my master, the surgeon, examined Ailie. There was no doubt it must kill her, and soon. It could be removed—it might never return—it would give her speedy relief—she should have it done. She courtesied,

Charles Stewart, of Dunearn, whose rare gifts and graces as a physician, a divine, a scholar, and a gentleman live only in the memory of those few who knew and survive him, liked to tell how Mr. Fuller used to say, that when he was in the pulpit, and saw a buirdly man come along the passage, he would instinctively draw himself up, measure his imaginary antagonist, and forecast how he would deal with him, his hands meanwhile condensing into fists, and tending to "square." He must have been a hard hitter if he boxed as he preached,—what "The Fancy" would call "an ugly customer."

'To-morrow," said the kind surgeon,—a man of few words. She and James and Rab and I retired. I noticed that he and she spoke little, but seemed to anticipate everything in each other. The following day, at noon, the students came in, hurrying up the great stair. At the first landing-place, on a small, well-known blackboard, was a bit of paper fastened by wafers, and many remains of old wafers beside it. On the paper were the words,—"An operation to-day. I. B. Clerk."

Up ran the youths, eager to secure good places: in they crowded, full of interest and talk. "What's the case?" "Which side is it?"

Don't think them heartless; they are neither better nor worse than you or I; they get over their professional horrors, and into their proper work,—

and in them pity, as an emotion, ending in itself or at best in tears and a long-drawn breath, lessens, while pity as a motive is quickened, and gains power and purpose. It is well for poor human nature that it is so.

The operating theatre is crowded; much talk and fun, and all the cordiality and stir of youth. The surgeon with his staff of assistants is there. In comes Ailie: one look at her quiets and abates the eager students. That beautiful old woman is too much for them; they sit down, and are dumb, and gaze at her. These rough boys feel the power of her presence. She walks in quickly, but without haste; dressed in her mutch, her neckerchief, her white dimity short-gown, her black bombazine petticoat, showing her white worsted stockings and her carpet-shoes. Behind her was James with Rab. James sat down in the distance, and took that huge and noble head between his knees. Rab looked perplexed and dangerous; forever cocking his ear and dropping it as fast.

Ailie stepped up on a seat, and laid herself on the table, as her friend the surgeon told her; arranged herself, gave a rapid look at James, shut her eyes, rested herself on me, and took my hand. The operation was at once begun; it was necessarily slow; and chloroform-one of God's best gifts to his suffering children—was then unknown. The surgeon did his work. The pale face showed its pain, but was still and silent. Rab's soul was working within him; he saw that something strange was going on,blood flowing from his mistress, and she suffering; his ragged ear was up, and importunate; he growled, and gave now and then a sharp, impatient yelp; he would have liked to have done something to that man. But James had him firm, and gave him a glower from time to time, and an intimation of a possible kick;—all the better for James, it kept his eye and his mind off Ailie.

It is over: she is dressed, steps gently and decently down from the table, looks for James; then turning to the surgeon and the students, she courtesies, -and in a low, clear voice, begs their pardon if she has behaved ill. The students—all of us—wept like children; the surgeon happed her up carefully,-and, resting on James and me, Ailie went to her room, Rab following. We put her to bed. James took off his heavy shoes, crammed with tackets, heel-capt and toe-capt, and put them carefully under the table saying, "Maister John, I'm for nane o' yer strynge nurse bodies for Ailie. I'll be her nurse, and I'll gang aboot on

my stockin' soles as canny as pussy." And so he did; and handy and clever, and swift and tender as any woman, was that horny-handed, snell, peremptory little man. Everything she got he gave her: he seldom slept; and often I saw his small, shrewd eyes out of the darkness, fixed on her. As before, they spoke little.

Rab behaved well, never moving, showing us how meek and gentle he could be, and occasionally, in his sleep, letting us know that he was demolishing some adversary. He took a walk with me every day, generally to the Candlemaker Row; but he was sombre and mild; declined doing battle, though some fit cases offered, and indeed submitted to sundry indignities; and was always very ready to turn, and came faster back, and trotted up the stair with much lightness, and went straight to that door.

Jess, the mare, had been sent, with her weather-worn cart, to Howgate, and had doubtless her own dim and placid meditations and confusions, on the absence of her master and Rab, and her unnatural freedom from the road and her cart.

For some days Ailie did well. The wound healed "by the first intention"; for, as James said, "Oor Ailie's skin is ower clean to beil." The students came in quiet and anxious, and surrounded her bed. She said she liked to see their young, honest faces. The surgeon dressed her, and spoke to her in his own short, kind way, pitying her through his eyes, Rab and James outside the circle,—Rab being now reconciled, and even cordial, and having made up his mind that as yet nobody required worrying, but, as you may suppose, semper paratus.

So far well: but, four days after the

operation, my patient had a sudden and long shivering, a "groosin'," as she called it. I saw her soon after; her eyes were too bright, her cheek colored; she was restless, and ashamed of being so; the balance was lost; mischief had begun. On looking at the wound, a blush of red told the secret: her pulse was rapid, her breathing anxious and quick, she was n't herself, as she said, and was vexed at her restlessness. We tried what we could. James did everything, was everywhere; never in the way, never out of it; Rab subsided under the table into a dark place, and was motionless, all but his eye, which followed every one. Ailie got worse; began to wander in her mind, gently; was more demonstrative in her ways to James, rapid in her questions, and sharp at times. He was vexed, and said, "She was never that way afore; no, never."

For a time she knew her head was wrong, and was always asking our pardon,—the dear, gentle old woman: then delirium set in strong, without pause. Her brain gave way, and then came that terrible spectacle,—

'The intellectual power, through words and things,

Went sounding on its dim and perilous way";

she sang bits of old songs and Psalms, stopping suddenly, mingling the Psalms of David and the diviner words of his Son and Lord with homely odds and ends and scraps of ballads.

Nothing more touching, or in a sense more strangely beautiful, did I ever witness. Her tremulous, rapid, affectionate, eager Scotch voice,—the swift, aimless, bewildered mind, the baffled utterance, the bright and perilous eye; some wild words, some household cares, something for James, the names

of the dead, Rab called rapidly and in a "' fremyt" voice, and he starting up surprised, and slinking off as if he were to blame somehow, or had been dreaming he heard; many eager questions and beseechings which James and I could make nothing of, and on which she seemed to set her all, and then sink back ununderstood. It was very sad, but better than many things that are not called sad. James hovered about, put out and miserable, but active and exact as ever; read to her, when there was a lull, short bits from the Psalms, prose and metre, chanting the latter in his own rude and serious way, showing great knowledge of the fit words, bearing up like a man, and doating over her as his "ain Ailie." "Ailie, ma woman!" "Ma ain bonnie wee dawtie!"

The end was drawing on: the golden bowl was breaking; the silver cord was

fast being loosed,—that animula blandula, vagula, hospes, comesque, was about to flee. The body and the soul—companions for sixty years—were being sundered, and taking leave. She was walking alone through the valley of that shadow into which one day we must all enter—and yet she was not alone, for we know whose rod and staff were comforting her.

One night she had fallen quiet, and, as we hoped, asleep; her eyes were shut. We put down the gas, and sat watching her. Suddenly she sat up in bed, and taking a bedgown which was lying on it rolled up, she held it eagerly to her breast,—to the right side. We could see her eyes bright with a surprising tenderness and joy, bending over this bundle of clothes. She held it as a woman holds her sucking child; opening out her nightgown impatiently, and holding it close, and brood-

ing over it, and murmuring foolish little words, as over one whom his mother comforteth, and who sucks and is satisfied. It was pitiful and strange to see her wasted dying look, keen and yet vague,—her immense love.

"Preserve me!" groaned James, giving way. And then she rocked back and forward, as if to make it sleep, hushing it, and wasting on it her infinite fondness. "Wae's me, doctor; I declare she 's thinkin' it 's that bairn." "What bairn?" "The only bairn we ever had; our wee Mysie, and she's in the Kingdom, forty years and mair." It was plainly true: the pain in the breast, telling its urgent story to a bewildered, ruined brain, was misread and mistaken; it suggested to her the uneasiness of a breast full of milk, and then the child; and so again once more they were together, and she had her ain wee Mysie in her bosom.

Rab-3

This was the close. She sank rapidly: the delirium left her; but, as she whispered, she was "clean silly"; it was the lightening before the final darkness. After having for some time lain still, her eyes shut, she said, "James!" He came close to her, and lifting up her calm, clear, beautiful eyes, she gave him a long look, turned to me kindly but shortly, looked for Rab but could not see him, then turned to her husband again, as if she would never leave off looking, shut her eyes, and composed herself. She lay for some time breathing quick, and passed away so gently, that when we thought she was gone, James, in his old-fashioned way, held the mirror to her face. After a long pause, one small spot of dimness was breathed out; it vanished away, and never returned, leaving the blank clear darkness of the mirror without a stain.

"What is our life? it is even a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Rab all this time had been full awake and motionless; he came forward beside us; Ailie's hand, which James had held, was hanging down; it was soaked with his tears; Rab licked it all over carefully, looked at her, and returned to his place under the table.

James and I sat, I don't know how long, but for some time,—saying nothing: he started up abruptly, and with some noise went to the table, and putting his right foreandmiddlefingers each into a shoe, pulled them out, and put them on, breaking one of the leather latchets, and muttering in anger, "I never did the like o' that afore!"

I believe he never did; nor after either. "Rab!" he said roughly, and pointing with his thumb to the bottom of the bed. Rab leapt up, and settled himself; his head and eye to the dead face. "Maister John, ye'll wait for me," said the carrier; and disappeared in the darkness, thundering downstairs in his heavy shoes. I ran to a front window; there he was, already round the house, and out at the gate, fleeing like a shadow.

I was afraid about him, and yet not afraid; so I sat down beside Rab, and being wearied, fell asleep. I awoke from a sudden noise outside. It was November, and there had been a heavy fall of snow. Rab was in statu quo; he heard the noise too, and plainly knew it, but never moved. I looked out; and there, at the gate, in the dim morning—for the sun was not up—was Jess and the cart,—a cloud of steam rising from the old mare. I did not see James; he was already at the door, and came up the stairs, and met

me. It was less than three hours since he left, and he must have posted out who knows how?-to Howgate, full nine miles off, yoked Jess, and driven her astonished into town. He had an armful of blankets, and was streaming with perspiration. He nodded to me, spread out on the floor two pairs of clean old blankets having at their corners, "A. G., 1794," in large letters in red worsted. These were the initials of Alison Græme, and James may nave looked in at her from without, -himself unseen but not unthought of,-when he was "wat, wat, and weary," and after having walked many a mile over the hills, may have seen her sitting, . while "a' the lave were sleepin"; and by the firelight working her name on the blankets, for her ain James's bed.

He motioned Rab down, and taking his wife in his arms, laid her in the

blankets, and happed her carefully and firmly up, leaving the face uncovered; and then lifting her, he nodded again sharply to me, and with a resolved but utterly miserable face strode along the passage, and downstairs, followed by Rab. I followed with a light; but he did n't need it. I went out, holding stupidly the candle in my hand in the calm frosty air; we were soon at the gate. I could have helped him, but I saw he was not to be meddled with, and he was strong, and did not need it. He laid her down as tenderly, as safely, as he had lifted her out ten days before, -as tenderly as when he had her first in his arms when she was only "A. G.,"-sorted her, leaving that beautiful sealed face open to the heavens; and then taking Jess by the head, he moved away. He did not notice me, neither did Rab, who presided behind the cart. I stood till they

passed through the long shadow of the College, and turned up Nicolson Street. I heard the solitary cart sound through the streets, and die away and come again; and I returned, thinking of that company going up Libberton Brae, then along Roslin Muir, the morning light touching the Pentlands and making them like on-looking ghosts; then down the hill through Auchindinny woods, past "haunted Woodhouselee"; and as daybreak came sweeping up the bleak Lammermuirs, and fell on his own door, the company would stop, and James would take the key, and lift Ailie up again, laying her on her own bed, and, having put Jess up, would return with Rab and shut the door.

James buried his wife, with his neighbors mourning, Rab inspecting the solemnity from a distance. It was snow, and that black ragged hole would look

strange in the midst of the swelling spotless cushion of white. James looked after everything; then rather suddenly fell ill, and took to bed; was insensible when the doctor came, and soon died. A sort of low fever was prevailing in the village, and his want of sleep, his exhaustion, and his misery made him apt to take it. The grave was not difficult to reopen. A fresh fall of snow had again made all things white and smooth; Rab once more looked on, and slunk home to the stable.

And what of Rab? I asked for him next week at the new carrier who got the good-will of James's business, and was now master of Jess and her cart. "How's Rab?" He put me off, and said rather rudely, "What's your business wi' the dowg?" I was not to be so put off. "Where's Rab?" He, getting confused and red, and intermeddling with his hair, said, "'Deed, sir, Rab's deid." "Dead! what did he die of?" "Weel, sir," said he, getting redder, "he didna exactly dee; he was killed. I had to brain him wi' a rackpin; there was nae doin' wi' him. He lay in the treviss wi' the mear, and wadna come oot. I tempit him wi' kail and meat, but he wad tak naething, and keepit me frae feedin' the beast. and he was aye gur gurrin, and grup gruppin' me by the legs. I was laith to make awa wi' the auld dowg, his like wasna atween this and Thornhill,-but, 'deed, sir, I could do naething else." I believed him. Fit end for Rab, quick and complete. His teeth and his friends gone, why should he keep the peace, and be civil?

THE MYSTERY OF BLACK AND TAN.



The Mystery of Black and Tan.

We—the Sine Quâ Non, the Duchess, the Sputchard, the Dutchard, the Ricapicticapic, Oz and Oz, the Maid of Lorn, and myself,—left Crieff some fifteen years ago, on a bright September morning, soon after daybreak, in a gig. It was morning, still and keen: the sun sending his level shafts across Strathearn, and through the thin mist over its river hollows, to the fierce Aberuchil Hills, and searching out the dark blue shadows in the corries of Benvorlich. But who and how many

are "we?" To make you as easy as we all were, let me tell you we were four; and are not these dumb friends of ours persons rathers than things? is not their soul ampler, as Plato would say, than their body, and contains rather than is contained? Is not what lives and wills in them, and is affectionate, as spiritual, as immaterial, as truly removed from mere flesh, blood, and bones, as that soul which is the proper self of their master? And when

we look each other in the face, as I now look in Dick's, who is lying in his "corny" by the fireside, and he in mine, is it not as much the dog within looking from out his eyes—the win-lows of his soul—as it is the man from

The Sine Quâ Non, who will not be pleased at being spoken of, is such an one as that vain-glorious and chivalrous Ulric von Hütten—the Refor-

mation's man of wit, and of the world, and of the sword, who slew Monkery with the wild laughter of his Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum—had in his mind when he wrote thus to his friend Fredericus Piscator (Mr. Fred. Fisher), on the 19th May, 1519, "Da mihi uxorem, Friderice, et ut scias qualem, venustam, adolescentulam, probe educatam, hilarem, verecundam, patientem." "Qualem," he lets Frederic understand in the sentence preceding, is one "qua cum ludam, quá jocos conferam, amæniores et leviusculas fabulas misceam, ubi sollicitudinis aciem obtundam, curarum æstus mitigem." And if you would know more of the Sine Qua Non, and in English, for the world is dead to Latin now, you will find her name and nature in Shakspeare's words, when King Henry the Eighth says, "go thy ways."

The Duchess, alias all the other

names till you come to the Maid of Lorn, is a rough, gnarled, incomparable little bit of a terrier, three parts Dandie-Dinmont, and one part—chiefly in tail and hair-cocker: her father being Lord Rutherfurd's famous "Dandie," and her mother the daughter of a Skye, and a light-hearted Cocker. The Duchess is about the size and weight of a rabbit; but has a soul as big, as fierce, and as faithful as had Meg Merrilies, with a nose as black as Topsy's; and is herself every bit as game and queer as that delicious imp of darkness and of Mrs. Stowe. Her legs set her long slim body about two inches and a half from the ground, making her very like a huge caterpillar or hairy oobit-her two eyes, dark and full, and her shining nose, being all of her that seems anything but hair. Her tail was a sort of stump, in size and in look very much like a spare

foreleg, stuck in anywhere to be near. Her color was black above and a rich brown below, with two dots of tan above the eyes, which dots are among the deepest of the mysteries of Black and Tan.

This strange little being I had known for some years, but had only possessed about a month. She and her pup (a young lady called Smoot, which means smolt, a young salmon), were given me by the widow of an honest and drunken—as much of the one as of the other—Edinburgh street-porter, a native of Badenoch, as a legacy from him and a fee from her for my attendance on the poor man's death-bed. But my first sight of the Duchess was years before in Broughton Street, when I saw her sitting bolt upright, begging, imploring, with those little rough four leggies, and those yearning, beautiful eyes. all the world, or any one, to help Rab-4

her master, who was lying "mortal" in the kennel. I raised him, and with the help of a ragged Samaritan, who was only less drunk than he, I got Macpherson—he held from Glen Truim -home; the excited doggie trotting off, and looking back eagerly to show us the way. I never again passed the Porters' Stand without speaking to her. After Malcolm's burial I took possession of her; she escaped to the wretched house, but as her mistress was off to Kingussie, and the door shut, she gave a pitiful howl or two, and was forthwith back at my door, with an impatient, querulous bark. And so this is our second of the four; and is she not deserving of as many names as any other Duchess, from her of Medina-Sidonia downwards?

A fierier little soul never dwelt in a queerer or stancher body; see her huddled up, and you would think her

a bundle of hair, or bit of old mossy wood, or a slice of heathery turf, with some red soil underneath; but speak to her, or give her a cat to deal with, be it bigger than herself, and what an incarnation of affection, energy, and fury—what a fell unquenchable little ruffian.

The Maid of Lorn was a chestnut mare, a broken-down racer, thoroughbred as Beeswing, but less fortunate in her life, and I fear not so happy occasione mortis: unlike the Duchess her body was greater and finer than her soul; still she was a ladylike creature, sleek, slim, nervous, meek, willing, and fleet. She had been thrown down by some brutal half-drunk Forfarshire laird. when he put her wildly and with her wind gone, at the last hurdle on the North Inch at the Perth races. She was done for and bought for ten pounds by the landlord of the Drummond Arms,

Crieff, who had been taking as much money out of her, and putting as little corn into her as was compatible with life, purposing to run her for the Consolation Stakes at Stirling. Poor young lady, she was a sad sight—broken in back, in knees, in character, and wind—in everything but temper, which was as sweet and all-enduring as Penelope's or our own Enid's.

Of myself, the fourth, I decline making any account. Be it sufficient that I am the Dutchard's master, and drove the gig.

It was, as I said, a keen and bright morning, and the S. Q. N. feeling chilly, and the Duchess being away after a cat up a back entry, doing a chance stroke of business, and the mare looking only half breakfasted, I made them give her a full feed of meal and water and stood by and enjoyed her enjoyment. It seemed too good to be

true, and she looked up every now and then in the midst of her feast, with a mild wonder. Away she and I bowled down the sleeping village, all overrun with sunshine, the dumb idiot man and the birds alone up, for the ostler was off to his straw. There was the S. Q. N. and her small panting friend, who had lost the cat, but had got what philosophers say is better—the chase. "Nous ne cherchons jamais les choses, mais la recherche des choses," says Pascal. The Duchess would substitute for les choses-les chats. Pursuit, not possession, was her passion. We all got in, and off set the Maid, who was in excellent heart, quite gay, pricking her ears and casting up her head, and rattling away at a great pace.

We baited at St. Fillans, and again cheered the heart of the Maid with unaccustomed corn—the S. Q. N., Duchie, and myself, going up to the

beautiful rising ground at the back of the inn, and lying on the fragrant heather looking at the Loch, with its mild gleams and shadows, and its second heaven looking out from its depths, the wild, rough mountains of Glenartney towering opposite. Duchie, I believe, was engaged in minor business close at hand, and caught and ate several large flies and a humble-bee; she was very fond of this small game.

There is not in all Scotland, or as far as I have seen in all else, a more exquisite twelve miles of scenery than that between Crieff and the head of Lochearn. Ochtertyre, and its woods : Benchonzie, the head-quarters of the earthquakes, only lower than Benvorlich-Strowan; Lawers, with its grand old Scotch pines; Comrie, with the wild Lednoch; Dunira; and St. Fillans, where we are now lying, and

where the poor thoroughbred is tucking in her corn. We start after two hours of dreaming in the half sunlight, and rumble ever and anon over an earthquake, as the common for call these same hollow, resounding rifts in the rock beneath, and arriving at the old inn at Lochearnhead, have a tousie tea. In the evening, when the day was darkening into night, Duchie and I,—the S. Q. N. remaining to read and rest,-walked up Glen Ogle. It was then in its primeval state, the new road non-existent, and the old one staggering up and down and across that most original and Cyclopean valley, deep, threatening, savage, and yet beautiful-

"Where rocks were rudely heaped, and rent As by a spirit turbulent; Where sights were rough, and sounds were wild. And everything unreconciled;"

with flocks of mighty boulders, straying all over it. Some far up, and frightful to look at, others huddled down in the river, immane pecus, and one huge unloosened fellow, as big as a manse, up aloft watching them, like old Proteus with his calves, as if they had fled from the sea by stress of weather, and had been led by their ancient herd altos visere montes-a wilder, more "unreconciled" place I know not; and now that the darkness was being poured into it, those big fellows looked bigger, and hardly "canny."

Just as we were turning to come home—Duchie unwillingly, as she had much multifarious, and as usual fruitless hunting to do-she and I were startled by seeing a dog in the side of the hill, where the soil had been broken. She barked and I stared; she trotted consequentially up and snuffed more canino, and I went nearer: it never moved, and on coming quite close I saw as it were the image of a terrier, a something that made me think of an idea unrealized; the rough, short, scrubby heather and dead grass, made a color and a coat just like those of a good Highland terrier—a sort of pepper and salt this one was-and below, the broken soil, in which there was some iron and clay, with old gnarled roots, for all the world like its odd, bandy, and sturdy legs. Duchie seemed not so easily unbeguiled as I was, and kept staring, and snuffing, and growling, but did not touch it,seemed afraid. I left and looked again, and certainly it was very odd the growing resemblance to one of the indigenous, hairy, low-legged dogs, one sees all about the Highlands, terriers, or earthy ones.

We came home, and told the S. Q. N.

our joke. I dreamt of that visionary terrier, that son of the soil, all night; and in the very early morning, leaving the S. Q. N. asleep, I walked up with the Duchess to the same spot. What a morning! it was before sunrise, at least before he had got above Benvorlich. The loch was lying in a faint mist, beautiful exceedingly, as if half veiled and asleep, the cataract of Edinample roaring less loudly than in the night, and the old castle of the Lords of Lochow, in the shadow of the hills, among its trees, might be seen

"Sole sitting by the shore of old romance."

There was still gloom in Glen Ogle, though the beams of the morning were shooting up into the broad fields of the sky. I was looking back and down, when I heard the Duchess bark sharply, and then give a cry of fear, and on

turning round, there was she with as much as she had of tail between her legs, where I never saw it before, and her small Grace, without noticing me or my cries, making down to the inn and her mistress, a hairy hurricane. I walked on to see what it was, and there in the same spot as last night, in the bank, was a real dog-no mistake; it was not, as the day before, a mere surface or spectrum, or ghost of a dog; it was plainly round and substantial; it was much developed since eight P. M. As I looked, it moved slightly, and as it were by a sort of shiver, as if an electric shock (and why not?) was being administered by a law of nature; it had then no tail, or rather had an odd amorphous look in that region; its eye, for it had one—it was seen in profile-looked to my profane vision like (why not actually?) a huge blaeberry (vaccinium Myrtillus, it is well

to be scientific) black and full; and I thought,—but dare not be sure, and had no time or courage to be minute,that where the nose should be, there was a small shining black snail, probably the limax niger of M. de Férussac, curled up, and if you look at any dog's nose you will be struck with the typical resemblance, in the corrugations and moistness and jetty blackness of the one to the other, and of the other to the one. He was a strongly-built, wiry, bandy, and short-legged dog. As I was staring upon him, a beam— Oh, first creative beam !- sent from the sun-

> "Like as an arrow from a bow, Shot by an archer strong"—

as helooked over Benvorlich's shoulder, and piercing a cloudlet of mist which clung close to him, and filling it with whitest radiance, struck upon that eye

or berry and lit up that nose or snail; in an instant he sneezed (the nisus (sneezus?) formativus of the ancients); that eye quivered and was quickened, and with a shudder—such as a horse executes with that curious muscle of the skin, of which we have a mere fragment in our neck, the Platysma Myoides, and which doubtless has been lessened as we lost our distance from the horse-type—which dislodged some dirt and stones and dead heather, and doubtless endless beetles, and, it may be, made some near weasel open his other eye, up went his tail, and out he came, lively, entire, consummate, warm, wagging his tail, I was going to say likea Christian, I mean like an ordinary dog. Then flashed upon me the solution of the Mystery of Black and Tan in all its varieties: the body, its upper part gray or black or yellow according to the upper soil and herbs, heather,

bent, moss, etc.; the belly and feet red or tan or light fawn, according to the nature of the deep soil, be it ochrey, ferruginous, light clay, or comminuted mica slate. And wonderfullest of all, the Dors of Tan above the eyes-and who has not noticed and wondered as to the philosophy of them ?- I saw made by the two fore feet, wet and clayey, being put briskly up to his eyes as he sneezed that genetic, vivifying sneeze, and leaving their mark, forever.

He took to me quite pleasantly, by virtue of "natural selection," and has accompanied me thus far in our "struggle for life," and he, and the S. Q. N., and the Duchess, and the Maid, returned that day to Crieff, and were friends all our days. I was a little timid when he was crossing a burn lest he should wash away his feet, but he merely colored the water, and every day less and less, till in a fortnight I could wash him without fear of his becoming a solution, or fluid extract of dog, and thus resolving the mystery back into itself.

The mare's days were short. She won the Consolation Stakes at Stirling, and was found dead next morning in Gibb's stables. The Duchess died in a good old age, as may be seen in the history of "Our Dogs." The S. Q. N., and the parthenogenesic earth-born, the Cespes Vivus-whom we sometimes called Joshua, because he was the Son of None (Nun), and even Melchisedec has been whispered, but only that, and Fitz Memnon, as being as it were a son of the Sun, sometimes the Autochthon αὐτόχθονος; (indeed, if the relation of the coup de soleil and the blaeberry had not been plainly causal and effectual, I might have called him Filius Gunni, for at the very moment of that shudder, by

which he leapt out of non-life into life, the Marquis's gamekeeper fired his rifle up the hill, and brought down a stray young stag,) these two are happily with me still, and at this moment she is out on the grass in a low easy-chair, reading Emilie Carlen's Brilliant Marriage, and Dick is lying at her feet, watching, with cocked ears, some noise in the ripe wheat, possibly a chicken, for, poor fellow, he has a weakness for worrying hens, and such small deer, when there is a dearth of greater. If any, as is not unreasonable, doubt me and my story, they may come and see Dick. 1 assure them he is well worth seeing.





